



Come, February, lend thy darkest sky...

I know it has been a few months since my last update and I wanted to start by wishing you all a belated Happy New Year. Although we are well into 2019, and Christmas seems so long ago now, I hope you all enjoyed the festive season and you are looking forward to a New Year, with new challenges.



I have been keeping very busy and I'll pick up where I left off with the Annual Service of Remembrance and Wreath Laying at Canterbury Cathedral. This took place on Sunday 11 November and it was an honour for me to represent the County and lay a wreath on this poignant occasion. I must say that it was a fitting tribute to those who lost their lives, made all the more moving in the centenary year. I just about made it into the photo!

Two days later I was welcoming a delegation from Finland to County Hall in order to sign a new Protocols of Cooperation. I was delighted to meet several representatives from the education sector and to be able to facilitate this collaboration between our two countries.



Two days after that I attended the Foster carer appreciation awards, which took place on Wednesday 14 November. It was a privilege for me to meet so many people who have chosen to be foster carers and share their lives with children who so desperately need their support. These are a truly remarkable group of people and we are very appreciative of all they do to help Kent's young people.



Moving into December but keeping up the fostering theme, I was able to present the winner of the Fostering Christmas Card Design competition with their prize they were able to come in to County Hall and see the card can see the design being made into a card and receive their award. Last year, Jazmin, aged 11, was the lucky winner.



On 4 December, I was lucky enough to take a tour of our own Kent History and Library Centre in Maidstone. The tour was very interesting, and I learnt a lot about local history and even had the opportunity to find out a little bit more about Kent's copy of the Magna Carta. One of the many interesting things I learnt on this visit was that the History and Library Centre offer monthly tours, which take place on the first Wednesday of each month, where

you can see behind the scenes and learn more about the fantastic archives we have available. I hope you will find the time to take one of these tours as they really are very interesting and informative. I enjoyed my visit there so much, I arranged a return visit in January.



My last two formal duties for 2018 were the Christmas Council Meeting on 13 December and the Chairman's Annual Christmas Care Home visits with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, Graham Gibbons. I am always happy to accompany Cabinet Members on visits and this time I was able to meet some of the staff and residents of the care homes across the County. This year, Graham and I visited St Martin's Hospital, Mental Health Social Work Team, King Edward Court Extra Care Housing and the Older People and Physical Disability Canterbury, Ashford & Coastal Team and the Operational Support Unit. I enjoyed spending time with staff and residents and took the opportunity to wish them a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Christmas was spent with family and friends, but my rest period was very short and January saw me back at the History and Library Centre, where I was fortunate enough to be able to see the Magna Carta and learn more about its history and discovery in the Archives in Maidstone.



Throughout the year I have been undertaking visits to some of the winners of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and The Queens Award for Enterprise and on 18 January, I visited Childrensalon, which is located in Tunbridge Wells. Founded in 1952, this organisation has gone from strength to strength, and now has customers in 160 countries. What struck me most about Childrensalon was the wonderful working atmosphere and the sense of family the owners have with their employees. It was such a happy place to visit and I can only commend the owners on their success, their ethos and their beautiful clothes. Childrensalon won The Queen's Award for Enterprise (International Trade) in 2018. You'll get a sense of the creativeness of the company from their photo of my visit!



On Sunday 28 January, I attended the Try Angle Awards at the Ashford International Hotel. These awards were introduced in 1994 to raise the profile of people aged 11-18 (or who are special needs and aged up to 25) in the community who really try, often with little recognition, to do their best. Categories for the Award include music, community action, personal development and positive intervention. Every young person nominated is recognised for their nomination, and then panels select district finalists in each category, all of whom are invited to the Spirit of Try Angle County final. This year, Archie was announced as 'The Spirit of Try Angle 2018' for his volunteering and fundraising for many good causes. He has brought life-saving equipment and training to his whole community, despite facing huge challenges himself.



Monday 21 January was Samaritans Brew Monday, where people are encouraged to get together with friends and colleagues for a cuppa and a chat, whilst raising funds for Samaritans. I am grateful to the Samaritans and staff at Canterbury West Station for allowing me to join them during the morning and letting me help handout Brew Monday Tea Bags to passing commuters. I'm also grateful to the team in the Office of the Head of Paid Service for hosting their own



Brew Monday event, furnishing me with a much-needed cuppa and cake and for raising £115.27 for my charity. I am grateful for all their efforts during the morning.

Last week, I visited made three team visits. First to Aylesford Highways Depot to present the teams there with their Staff Award in recognition of the work they did during the adverse weather conditions at the start of 2018. From there, I went to visit The Education People at County Hall, a one-stop shop for education services, supporting the full age range from early years to young adults.



On Thursday I visited the Ashford Highways Depot to present their teams with staff Recognition Award work during the beast from the East in February/March of 2018. The teams had worked exceptionally hard to keep the county moving during the worst snowfall for a number of years. I was happy to be able to celebrate their achievement with them and was also able to present long service certificates to two members of staff who had reached significant milestones in their service with the County Council.

I will be back soon with another update on my activities but, in the meantime, if anybody would like me to visit their team or mark a significant achievement with them please do contact the Civic Office to let me know and I will try to fit in to my schedule. Until next time...

With very best wishes

Mike Angell
Chairman of Kent County Council